

African Elephant Conservation Fund



In the last century, rampant ivory poaching and habitat loss caused African elephant numbers to drop from over ten million animals in 1900 to fewer than 500,000 by the late 1980's. Uncontrolled hunting for ivory and meat, and loss of habitat continue to threaten the African elephant today.

People often rely on wild animals as a source of meat (commonly referred to as 'bushmeat'). As populations increase, the demand for bushmeat within Africa is skyrocketing. To make matters worse, people from urban centers and from other continents are increasingly looking to Africa's forests as sources of wild products. This uncontrolled hunting is stripping Africa's wilderness areas of elephants and other coveted game animals.

In addition to the ivory and bushmeat trades, the loss of natural elephant habitat and the resulting conflict between elephants and humans threaten elephant survival throughout Africa. As human populations grow and expand into remote areas, natural habitat is cleared and destroyed to make way for agriculture. Elephant populations



Savanna elephants (*Loxodonta africana africana*) *testing their strength*

Michelle Gadd/USFWS

are compressed into smaller ranges with limited food and water supplies. Hungry elephants may wander into villages and damage crops. People often kill elephants in an attempt to stop the crop raids and people are also sometimes killed trying to fend off elephants.

The specific threats to elephants vary in severity from region to region. Central Africa has been plagued by political instability and civil war which have led to an increased flow of guns into the region and unabated flow of ivory out. Economic hardship has driven people to use these weapons to kill elephants for food and for ivory. By contrast, in well protected areas of Southern Africa, elephant numbers have stabilized or even increased. In some parks, elephants suffer from crowding due to loss of habitat and blockage of migration routes. In East Africa, elephant populations have decreased by 65 percent due to poaching and land conversion. Where elephants persist, conflict with humans is on the rise.

In 1988, the United States Congress passed the African Elephant Conservation Act to establish a fund to help protect, conserve, and manage African elephants. Special emphasis was placed on fortifying protection for elephants in countries with uncontrolled poaching, and implementing conservation activities throughout elephant range.



Forest elephants (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) *at mineral rich Dzanga Sangha in the Central African Republic* © Andrea Turkal/WCS

The 2010 Congressional appropriation of \$2 million leveraged over \$1.9 million in matching funds and funded 23 African elephant projects, including the following efforts:

- Conduct field training in Congo and Gabon to improve practical skills of Cameroonian, Congolese and Gabonese researchers and conservationists who work in the most important elephant habitats in the Congo Basin. This network was initiated with USFWS funding in 2009 and is intended to continue to support these individuals and conservation projects.
- Conduct aerial surveys of elephants and other large mammals in the Virunga National Park in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), bordering Uganda, in order to identify where regional instability and warfare have most affected wildlife. The project includes professional training for DRC's national conservation authority, ICCN, in aerial survey techniques, survey analysis, and park management.
- Construct an office building and staff housing at Zunguluka on the eastern boundary of the Okapi Faunal Reserve in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and sponsor formal training for the Assistant Warden and a Senior Ranger from DRC's national conservation authority at the Southern African Wildlife College.
- Conduct an independent assessment of the conservation status and needs of Gabon's national parks, particularly with respect to elephant conservation; designing and implementing training programs and strategies to address the identified needs; and purchasing basic start-up equipment and consumable supplies for anti-poaching missions to improve the protection of elephants and other wildlife.
- Support village scouts to conduct anti-poaching and wildlife protection activities in the Kakumbi and Mkhanya village areas around South Luangwa National Park in Zambia. Specific activities include patrols to remove snares and manning road blocks to intercept bushmeat, assisting wildlife injured by snares, mapping and analyzing patrol and law enforcement data and collaborating with the national wildlife authority, ZAWA.
- Sponsor campaigns in China (a major ivory consumer nation) to increase awareness about rules and regulations regarding ivory trade and about the plight of the African elephant. Activities include producing and distributing educational material to the public and to travelers, training government officers, ivory processors and retailers on ivory trading regulations and restrictions, and conducting market surveys to check regulatory compliance by retailers and processing establishments in five major cities.



Field biologist Modeste Doukaga monitoring elephant habitat in Bateke Plateau, Gabon Michelle Gadd/USFWS

African Elephant Conservation Funding from 2006 through 2010	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	300
Total Number of Grants Awarded	138
Percentage of Countries with African Elephants Receiving Grants	78%
Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress	\$8,235,405
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$8,205,000
Total Funds to Administration of Grants	\$457,259
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$22,196,000

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